

The Murders of Crispus and Fausta 247

on which it is as fascinating as it is easy to speculate. On the whole, it seems most likely that Constantine's fears had been worked upon to such an extent that he believed himself surrounded by traitors in his own family, that the Empress Fausta had been "the leading spirit in the plot to ruin Crispus, and "that when the Emperor discovered his mistake he turned in fury upon his wife. It may be, as Eutropius suggests, that his mental balance had been upset by his extraordinary success, that his prosperity and the adulation of the world had been too much for him.* That is a charitable theory which, in default of a better, we, too, may as well adopt.

We need not doubt the sincerity of his repentance. Zosimus depicts the Emperor remorsefully begging the priests of the old religion to purify him from his crime, and says that when they sternly refused, Constantine turned to accept the soothing offices of a wandering Egyptian from Spain. -Another account, current among pagans, was that **he** applied for comfort to the philosopher, Sopater, ~who would have nothing to say to so heinous a sinner, and that he then fell in with certain Christian bishops, who promised him full forgiveness at "the price of repentance and baptism. The motive **of** these legends is as obvious as their falsity. The pagans, in defiance of chronology, sought to explain "the Emperor's conversion to Christianity as a result **of** the murders that lay heavy upon his soul, murders **so** revolting as only to admit of pardon in the eyes

**Verum insolentia rerum secundarum aliquantum
Constantinus & c. illa favorabili animi facilitate miitavit
(x., p. 6).*